

CARLSBAD AVENUES

Let's talk about OPEN SPACE

Prior to 1986, the Carlsbad General Plan created in the 1950s directed that 25% of the city would be preserved as open space in protection of environmentally significant land and sensitive habitat. Under the Growth Management Plan approved by voters in 1986, the amount of open space was increased to 40%. This additional 15% was mandated to be set aside in fulfillment of aesthetic and quality-of-life concerns. Thanks to the subsequent efforts of a citizens' committee and City Council action taken upon the committee's recommendations, open space in Carlsbad will be preserved in perpetuity.

The Open Space Standard of the Growth Management Plan provides that "Fifteen percent of the total land area in the zone exclusive of environmentally constrained non-developable land must be set aside for permanent open space and must be available concurrent with development."

An open question

When you think of open space, what comes to mind? A serene wooded walking trail inviting quiet contemplation? A wetland teeming with infant and adult members of endangered species? A ballfield? A park picnic bench? A lonesome canyon? A mountain bike path? Scenic greenbelts? Manicured golf courses? Nature centers? The beach?

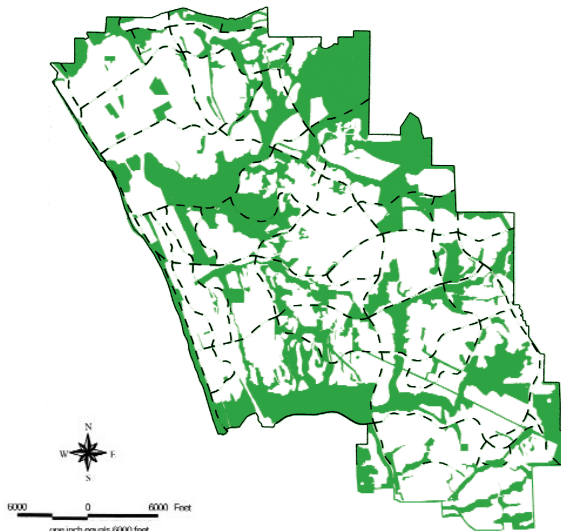
All these places and more are considered open space. The term refers to land that is specifically designated and set aside for:

1) preservation of natural resources; 2) managed production of resources; 3) programmed and unprogrammed outdoor recreation; 4) aesthetic, cultural and educational purposes; and 4) public health and safety.

In Carlsbad, open space is one of 11 public facility/service "standards" addressed in the Growth Management Plan. It identifies — in each of the 25 development zones located throughout the city — the 15% of open space to be set aside in addition to the 25% originally mandated in the General Plan.

EXISTING AND FUTURE OPEN SPACE

Total Open Space at Buildout: 9,899 Acres



Currently, open space totals 7,086 acres. Eventually, 2,813 acres will be added to reach the total acreage of 9,899 acres.

A story of citizen involvement and City Council action

If a municipal planner could start from scratch to design a city, open space would be the first and guiding principle. Usually, by the time a city is incorporated and planning begins, a sizable population of people and buildings already exists, making the process of securing open space much more cumbersome and far less ideal unless land acquisition is used as a means of obtaining additional acreage.

In the mid-1980s, Carlsbad found itself in a favorable position of being able to address the issue of open space when the city was approximately only one-third built out. Here is a look at the Council- and citizen-driven history of open space in Carlsbad.

Before Growth Management ...

A Carlsbad ordinance protected environmentally significant/sensitive areas from development. These areas, which comprised 25% of the total 23,000 acres (42.18 square miles) of the city, included the three lagoons (all of Agua Hedionda and the Carlsbad portions of Buena Vista and Batiquitos), the six-plus miles of beach, and other non-developable land including bluffs and canyons.

With Growth Management ...

Open space was recognized as a priority, with 15% non-environmentally-significant areas dispersed throughout the city added for a total of 40% of Carlsbad.

After Growth Management ...

Concerned citizens re-opened the open space issue to ensure that the concept and the land set aside could never be rescinded. The unfolding of this story, which changed the landscape of our community and put Carlsbad at the forefront of environmental stewardship, continues on the other side of this publication.



In a 2000 Recreation Department survey of 4,000 residents, "Access to Open Space" topped the list of important community benefits.



Open space abounds at and around Agua Hedionda.

The 15/15 solution

Fifteen members of a “Citizens’ Committee for Review of Carlsbad’s Open Space Plan and Programs” are to be thanked for ensuring the enduring preservation of the additional 15% open space set aside in the Growth Management Plan. Many of these committee members, who were appointed by the City Council with an eye toward bringing in people with diverse and in some cases extremely strong points of view, continued their service to the city. Two became Council members in later years, others volunteered on City boards/commissions and many have remained active in the community.

- The committee met regularly from 1988-89.
- Although they diverged on some issues, no-growth, slow-growth and pro-growth advocates all agreed the City needed to do a better job of handling open space.
- The City Council tasked the committee with the responsibility of prioritizing the additional 15% of open space acreage; recommending how best to utilize it and lock it in for future generations to enjoy.

THE STARTING POINT – December 1988

“The committee concluded that ... there is no cohesive policy nor any plan setting forth open space goals and guiding acquisitions, protection, maintenance and funding. To remedy these perceived deficiencies, the committee agreed, generally unanimously and always overwhelmingly, on open space policies to enhance the beauty of the city and quality of life of its citizens, both for the near future and looking ahead to buildout.”

Report of the Citizens’ Committee to Save Open Space

The committee’s plan was far ahead of its time

- The 15 committed citizens meticulously reviewed the city’s 25 development zones, mapping out open space priorities within each.
- Creatures of both human and “critter” varieties received attention.
- Wanting the plan to equal or exceed the best open space/ environmental programs in existence, the committee and Carlsbad staff researched programs in Laguna Beach, Newport Beach, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and other cities known for their aesthetic environments.
- One far-reaching committee focus was on wildlife and habitat preservation — this was a decade before that issue would receive wide attention at the regional level! By the time San Diego County began conceptualizing a countywide habitat management program in the 1990s, Carlsbad had already begun its efforts.
- Another leading-edge committee creation was the initiation of a trail plan, which is continuing at an energetic pace today.

The plan was firm, but flexible

- Cognizant that things can change and evolve over the years, the committee recommended a plan that offered flexibility within rigid constraints.
- The plan — which became a legal, abiding City ordinance — mandated that once a land portion is designated as open space, that designation cannot be removed (or the land used for other purposes) unless all of the following provisions are met: 1) an equal or greater area is substituted; 2) the proposed substitution is of equal or greater environmental quality; and 3) the proposed open space adjustment is contiguous or within close proximity to the original area within that development zone.

AN ENDING AND A NEW BEGINNING – July/August 1989

On July 17, as stated in the minutes of the committee’s last meeting, “Motion was duly made, seconded and unanimously carried to approve oral presentation of the final report to the City Council.” The recommendations were enthusiastically received by the City Council and became part of the Open Space Amendment to the General Plan approved in 1994.

Further Information and Involvement

If you would like further information on open space and related topics, we invite you to:

- Contact the Planning Department at 602-4600.
- Review a copy of the Growth Management Plan available at both Libraries and at the Faraday Center.
- Check out the City’s website at www.ci.carlsbad.ca.us.
- Call 434-2808 to sign up for the Carlsbad Citizens’ Academy.

If you would like to observe and/or participate in the planning process, we invite you to:

- Attend a Planning Commission meeting, generally held on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 6 pm in the Council Chambers, 1200 Carlsbad Village Drive.
- Attend a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, generally held on the third Monday at 5:30 pm in the Council Chambers.
- Learn about applying for membership on these or other volunteer advisory boards and commissions by calling the City Clerk at 434-2808.
- Attend a regularly scheduled City Council meeting, generally held on Tuesdays at 6 pm in the Council Chambers.
- Call 434-2820 to confirm above dates and times and to get more information on how you can help direct the avenues of your city’s policies and programs.

